

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The passive is used primarily to depict the event from the point of view of the Undergoer. Givon (1990: 566) states that ‘the notion of voice is fundamentally pragmatic’; in a transitive clause, a semantically identical event can be portrayed from several different perspectives using ‘the very same verb, agent and patient’. The passive voice is one of these perspectives.

In the case of Japanese passive, in particular, this study maintains that it is the perspective of the affected entity from which the event is portrayed. Although the degree and nature of the affectedness varies, all Japanese passives convey the meaning of affectedness in some sense. Furthermore, this thesis recognises three types of affectedness in Japanese passive constructions: emotive affectedness, direct / physical affectedness, and objective affectedness.

6.1 Aims and findings of this study

This study set out three main aims and eight more specific research questions related to these three aims. The aims and related questions of this research were as follows:

- (i) Firstly, the thesis aimed to clarify and reclassify the wide range of

functions of passives in Japanese.

- (a) What specific syntactic features and semantic functions do Japanese passives have?
 - (b) What broad types can these features and functions be classified into?
 - (c) What sorts of correlations exist between the syntactic and the semantic distinctions?
- (ii) Secondly, the thesis aimed to tackle and solve the well-known issue of the ‘adversative meaning’, referred to in this research as the ‘special meaning of emotive affectedness’, which accompanies only some types of passive in Japanese.
- (a) With what types of passive does the special emotive nuance appear?
 - (b) Under what circumstances does the special emotive nuance occur?
- (iii) Finally, the thesis aimed to reveal how the multi-functioned Japanese passives are actually used in real contexts.
- (a) What types of passive are used most in Japanese and why are these more common than other types?
 - (b) What are the characteristics of the participants in Japanese passive constructions?
 - (c) What types of proposition do Japanese people express using the passive voice?

The final aim (aim (iii)) was the ultimate goal for this research. The first and the

second aims should actually be seen as parts of the final one. The investigation started by achieving the first aim: to clarify and categorise the functions of Japanese passives. This was carried out by reclassifying Japanese passives according to their syntactic features and semantic functions, and by reexamining the relationships between them (related to the research questions (i-a) to (i-c)).

In relation to syntactic features (questions (i-a) and (i-b)), Japanese passives were divided into three groups: the direct passive, the semi-direct passive and the indirect passive, depending on to which argument in the active counterpart the passive subject corresponds. If the subject corresponds to a core argument in the active clause, the passive is classified as the direct passive. In a semi-direct passive, on the other hand, the subject would correspond to a peripheral participant in the active clause. The subject in an indirect passive does not correspond to any of the arguments in the active clause, core or peripheral.

The semi-direct passive is a new category. This type has been included in the indirect passive in previous research. This distinction between the indirect and semi-direct passive, in this thesis, has been found very helpful when it comes to teasing out the issue of the special emotive nuance.

A wide range of semantic functions of Japanese passives were recognised (question (i-a)): depicting a situation in which the subject is somehow affected by the event, defocusing the 'actor', describing the subject's attribute, etc. These functions were first

classified into two basic groups, the plain passive and the passive of interest (question (i-b)). The plain passive is one that generally has a non-sentient subject and describes an event objectively. Nevertheless, it portrays the situation as something that is done to the referent of the subject, and therefore implies the nuance of affectedness. This type of affectedness is called ‘objective affectedness’ in this thesis. The plain passive is further divided into two types: the attributive passive and the demotional passive. The attributive passive is used to describe some attribute of the subject by the rest of the sentence. The primary function of the demotional passive is to marginalise the ‘actor’. It is a comparatively new type of passive in the Japanese language, whose usage has increased during the last century.

In contrast to the plain passive, the second broad group, the passive of interest, is one that portrays an event in terms of the concerns of the referent of the subject. The referent of the subject is directly and / or emotionally affected by the event. In the majority of cases, therefore, the referent of the subject is sentient, and most likely human. The passive of interest is categorised into two subtypes: the sentient passive and the passive with a latent affectee. The sentient passive is used to describe a situation in which the subject is somehow affected by the event. The second type, the passive with a latent affectee, has a non-sentient subject, and yet it delineates the direct affectedness of the subject. This is the category in which one can assume a latent affectee¹.

In terms of correlations between the syntactic and the semantic classifications

¹ A latent affectee is a sentient entity that one can assume is affected by the event denoted by the passive clause in some way, but is not actually a participant of the passive sentence.

(question (i-c)), this study argued against the previous view of the straightforward correlation between the syntactic and semantic distinctions - more specifically the correspondence between the indirect passive and the adversative passive on the one hand, and that between the direct passive and the neutral passive on the other. This is because some direct passives have the special emotive nuance while, at the same time, some tokens of what has previously been called the ‘indirect passive’² do not have the emotive reading. While it is true that the indirect passive - according to the definition used in this study - is accompanied by the special emotive nuance, the correlation in the case of the other syntactic types is much more complicated. This issue relates to the second aim of this thesis. We, therefore, set out to investigate this issue to tackle and solve the question of the ‘special emotive affectedness’, or the ‘adversative meaning’, next.

In order to achieve the second aim, the present research first examined passives with an emotive undertone within the framework of each syntactic category of Japanese passive: the indirect passive, the semi-direct passive and the direct passive (research question (ii-a)). It then investigated in detail where the special meaning of emotive affectedness actually came from (question (ii-b)).

The study observed that the controversial cases of ‘indirect passives’ that do not have the special emotive nuance are actually better categorised as semi-direct passives. More specifically, the cases concerned all belong to the so-called ‘possessor passive’,

² According to the definition used in this thesis, these are actually categorised as semi-direct passives rather than indirect passives.

whose subject corresponds to the genitive case or ‘possessor’ NP in the active counterpart. Not all instances of the ‘possessor passive’ have the special emotive undertone. Modifying Shibatani’s (1996: 7) and Teramura’s (1982: 244-245) analyses, this study found that if two criteria are satisfied, then the sentence is not likely to have the special meaning of emotive affectedness. These two criteria are: (i) the *o*-NP in the passive – the ‘possessed’ NP – is high in proximity to the possessor, and therefore the ‘possessor’ NP, or the subject of the passive, is central to the event; and (ii) the event has a significant impact on the subject. The reason why the sentence is not accompanied by the special meaning of emotive affectedness when these criteria are satisfied is that the subject is highly relevant to the event, and therefore it does not require any supplementary semantic input to increase its relevance to the event. On the contrary, if the ‘possessed’ NP is low in proximity to the possessor, and thus the ‘possessor’ NP is not central to the event, and if the event denoted by the verb does not have a strong impact on the subject, then the sentence is more likely to be associated with the special emotive undertone.

In the case of direct passives that have the special emotive nuance, the present study noted that it is the degree of the centrality of the subject and the impact of the event on the subject, again, that is the crucial factor. The lower the degree of the centrality of the subject or the impact of the event on the subject is, the stronger the special emotive undertone is perceived to be.

Finally, the investigation for the ultimate goal of the present study was performed.

Aim (iii) was to reveal how the multi-functioned Japanese passives are actually used in real contexts. This aim had already been partly achieved in a sense, since aims (i) and (ii) are considered to be parts of aim (iii). Further examinations were carried out in relation to research questions (iii-a), (iii-b) and (iii-c).

In terms of the proportion of each category of passive in the data (question (iii-a)), the most striking finding was the predominant proportion of the direct passive (almost 90% of the data). In contrast, the frequency of the occurrence of the indirect passive, the major focus of previous study of Japanese passives, was, in fact, very low (1.2% of the data). Even if examples of the semi-direct passive are taken into account as well, as has been done in previous research, the proportion would still be only 3.4%. The results show that the case of indirect passive can hardly be taken to represent Japanese passive constructions in general.

The main findings on the characteristics of the participants of the passive (question (iii-b)) are related to the ‘actor’ and the passive subject. The first finding on the ‘actor’ confirmed the view in previous research: an ‘actor’ argument is often elided in a passive sentence. This study observed that more than 80% of the passive sentences in the data do not involve an overt ‘actor’ in the sentence.

The most prominent finding on the passive subject was the substantial number of non-sentient subjects (almost 40% of the data). Types of passive that have a non-sentient

subject are the attributive passive, the demotional passive, and the passive with a latent affectee. The demotional passive, in particular, takes up more than 20% of the data gathered for this study, even though it is said not to be inherent to Japanese and to have come into use with the ‘actor’ marker *ni-yotte* only in the 19th century. It is apparent from this study that its usage has dramatically increased over the course of the 20th century.

Regarding the propositional meaning in a passive clause (research question (iii-c)), this research obtained the result that, although more than half of the propositional meanings in the passive are ‘negative’ (about 55%), there still are considerable number of passives that have a neutral or positive propositional meaning.

Another significant finding on the propositional meaning was that it seemed to be related to the degree of centrality of the passive subject to the event, that is how central the role played by the referent of the subject is to the event. We observed that, with regard to our syntactic classification of passive, the lower the degree of the centrality of the subject of the passive to the event, the more likely it is that the passive clause holds a negative propositional meaning. Consequently, the propositional meaning of a direct passive clause, whose subject’s centrality is the highest of all, is less often negative than that of an indirect or semi-direct passive. The subject of a semi-direct passive, of course, is far less centrally involved in the event than that of a direct passive clause, and the subject of an indirect passive is not involved at all.

In terms of the semantic categorisation of the Japanese passive, it is the type of affectedness that is highly relevant to the propositional meaning of the passive clause. The passive of interest, which is associated with the special meaning of emotive affectedness or direct / physical affectedness, appears mainly in propositions with a negative meaning. In contrast, the plain passive, which involves objective affectedness, mostly holds a neutral propositional meaning.

6.2 Limitations of this study and recommendations for further research

All the eight research questions specified at the beginning of this study have been addressed in the course of this study. However, there are a number of important limitations of this research project, and they must be recognised.

First of all, all three aims set for this research were achieved only with respect to the genres examined in this study, that is novels and workplace conversations. It is therefore essential to investigate and compare with other genres, such as newspapers, scientific writing, casual conversation, and so on.

The amount of data, in particular the spoken data, was also somewhat limited. A larger scale of investigation would add weight to the claims made in this study.

The present study has mostly been done principally at the level of the sentence rather than the level of the text. However, in investigating constructions that express the attitude of the speaker, portray an event in terms of the concern of a participant, or imply a special emotive nuance, it is essential to look beyond the sentence to the wider context.

In acknowledging the limitations of the current study, the most important recommendation for the further studies on the Japanese passive is that comparative studies be undertaken with wide range of languages, especially with some other Asian languages, such as Chinese and Vietnamese that are also said to have an ‘adversative passive’ construction. It is also essential to identify the similarities and differences between the passive and other, functionally related constructions in Japanese, such as the ‘-te shimau’ construction, the ‘-te aru’ construction, and the unaccusative intransitive construction.